

# WHAMO

## World-Herald Attitude Monitoring Operation

*A citizen's organization providing an alternative voice*

Vol. 4, No. 5  
May 24, 1989



# World-Herald Backs Wadman to the End

by Lothar Luken

*The author recently returned to Omaha after a several years' absence. He first noticed his "displeasure" with the World-Herald during his journalism studies at UNO in the late Sixties. He admits that if he were a Big Red fan, he would find the paper "very enlightened and a must-read!" He concluded by observing that he likes people and politics, however, both of which are treated one-dimensionally by the daily.*

*Luken was a volunteer in the Boyle campaign.*

To even the most casual reader, it is apparent that the editor of the World-Herald really likes Police Chief Robert Wadman. This mutual affection was quite evident during the recent mayoral campaign.

The W-H treated the Wadman firing and the Mike Boyle connection in a most curious manner. Before Boyle announced his mayoral bid on February 27, the W-H consistently reported that Wadman was fired in 1986 by "the administration of then-mayor Mike Boyle." This would usually be followed with "Boyle was later recalled and Wadman was reinstated by the court after that."

Notice that Boyle was not directly targeted as the person who did the firing. Also, according to the W-H, there is the implied

cause and effect of the recall and the subsequent reinstatement of Wadman.

After Boyle's mayoral announcement, the W-H began to shift gears slightly. In a March 1 story, instead of "the administration," it is then-Public Safety Director Keith Lant who was the person firing Wadman.

More importantly, mention is made as to the reason why Wadman was fired: "the chief refused to sign disciplinary orders against officers who were involved in a surveillance of Boyle's brother-in-law." So far the Wadman issue was still tame reporting, but the W-H took the gloves off shortly after Boyle won the primary April 4.

Four days later, the W-H reported: "Boyle fired Wadman for refusing to discipline subordinates involved in the controversial drunken-driving arrest of Boyle's brother-in-law, John Howell. The firing was a major issue in Boyle's January 1987 recall."

### Boyle Neutral During Arrest

Forget the niceties before the primary, the W-H laid the blame directly on Boyle and stated that a "controversy" existed while implying that Wadman was fired because somebody arrested a Boyle relative.

Although you wouldn't have guessed it from W-H reporting, the arrest of John Howell on the DWI charge was not the controversy. In fact, Howell was arrested, convicted and sentenced without any incident or controversy. The "controversy" arose a year after the arrest when the two arresting officers told Keith Lant the real reason why Howell was picked up on a DWI charge.

That was "to provide Howell's relatives with an opportunity to interfere with or obstruct the criminal justice process." (See related story, "Mission Impossible.") In other words, Howell was arrested in the hope that Boyle would seek special treatment for Howell.

And who knew of this plan? Two police lieutenants and their "superiors as well as the FBI...and (they) approved the plan to arrest Howell."

Wadman was fired when he refused to sign disciplinary notices directed at three participants in the arrest plot and the subsequent investigation. He insisted that the Howell arrest was not a plot and, therefore, he could not sign the disciplinary notices. When offered the chance to attach a disclaimer to clarify that the disciplinary measures did not originate with him nor did he approve of them, Wadman still refused to sign the orders.

That led to his firing because of insubordination, which the Nebraska Supreme Court upheld on April 21. The day before the Court's ruling, the W-H reported on Boyle's meeting with Wadman earlier that morning. At the end of the story this paragraph appeared: "In October 1986, Boyle and Lant ordered Wadman to discipline police officials for orchestrating the surveillance and arrest of Boyle's brother-in-law, John Howell, for drunken driving. Wadman refused and was fired for insubordination." Again, the W-H gives the impression that Boyle fired Wadman in revenge for Howell's arrest, omitting that the *real reason for the arrest was to entrap Boyle*.

The last assault the W-H mounted came shortly before the general election. The morning edition on May 4, just five days before the election, headlined the story, "Wadman Brief Says Signature Wasn't Needed." The story describes a written brief filed by Wadman's attorney to persuade the Supreme Court to grant a rehearing. The morning edition continues to quote from Martin Cannon's brief and his belief that Wadman's signature wasn't needed on the disciplinary notices.

### Cheap Shots from Cannon

The evening edition's version of the story was as different from the morning version as evil from good. The headline: "Chief's Lawyer: Boyle's 'Rage' Led to Firing."

The first paragraph quotes Wadman's attorney blaming the chief's job troubles on

a city official (Keith Lant) who was eager to please an "alcohol deranged" mayor. Cannon's brief continues: "An alcohol-deranged mayor, with a safety director in thrall who lives by such a mayor's whim, went wild when Robert Wadman stood up for his policemen against Boyle's rage."

The brief continues, "Lant must have been desperately interested in Wadman's signature, meaningless to the case, but apparently dearly desired by Lant's alcohol-impaired supervisor."

Apparently the editor of the evening edition felt that those quotations weren't strong enough. So, just to make sure that even the dimmest W-H subscriber understood who Mike Boyle was, after nine weeks of campaigning, the editor offered this paragraph in the same story:

"Boyle was later recalled by Omaha voters. Now a candidate for mayor in next Tuesday's general election, Boyle has said he is an alcoholic and had his last drink 14 months ago."

So in just one paragraph, the W-H managed to gore Boyle with the dual horns of alcoholism and the recall triggered by Wadman's firing.

Even after the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled that Wadman was properly fired, the W-H still defends him. Even after the Court upheld the finding that Boyle's relative was arrested in a ploy to entrap Boyle, the W-H still defends Wadman. If they gave Pulitzers for loyalty rather than excellence in journalism, the W-H would surely deserve one.

### Get Boyle Relative

## OPD's 'Mission Impossible'

*The following is excerpted from the Nebraska Supreme Court ruling, Wadman v. City of Omaha, April 21, 1989*

In October 1985, OPD Lt. Anthony Infantino met with OPD Officers James Alexander and Tom Martin and gave the officers a memo entitled "Mission Impossible" -- an outline of an undercover plan designed by Police Lt. Timothy Dunning for surveillance and arrest of John Howell. Although Alexander and Martin were experienced narcotics and intelligence officers, Infantino assigned the officers to "conduct a covert type surveillance in an attempt to arrest [John Howell] for operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated." John Howell had relatives who held political office, including his father, Sam Howell, Douglas County

### WHAMO's Back!

*"I want my WHAMO," an old friend used to squeal with mock petulance whenever the post office failed to get him his issue in a timely fashion. Even now, I still hear people say they miss WHAMO, our old irreverent format, short for the World-Herald Attitude Monitoring Operation, whose main goal was to keep an eye on the W-H, affectionately referred to as "our favorite local daily" (our circulation was pretty much limited to Omaha in those days).*

*So, by popular demand, here is a resurrection of WHAMO. Please continue to think of us as the place to go when the old W-H really makes your blood boil.*

*We'll crank out WHAMO again soon.*

-FM

# Bush's Political Secrets Top Under-reported News

Readers of the alternative press await the yearly announcement of Project Censored's best -censored stories as eagerly as Oscar nominations are awaited in Hollywood.

Topping the list of 25 overlooked issues of 1988 is the failure of America's national news media to fully investigate and report the political background of George Bush during the political campaign, according to a national panel of media experts.

Richard H. Meeker, national president of the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies and publisher of *Willamette Week*, in Portland, Oregon, charged that if the average American voter had read the alternative press's coverage of the campaign in 1988, George Bush would not have been elected president.

The second most under-covered story of the year, cited by Project Censored, revealed how the EPA concealed pollution stories; the third-ranked story told of the risk of a nuclear disaster with the space shuttle.

Now in its 13th year, Project Censored, a national media research effort conducted annually at Sonoma State University, California, finds stories about significant issues which are not widely publicized by the national news media.

Following are the top ten under-reported news stories of 1988 as announced by project director Carl Jensen, professor of Communication Studies at Sonoma State University:

1

## Bush's "Dirty Big Secrets."

America's Alternative press reported more than 10 stories exposing questionable activities by George Bush dating from his reported role as a CIA "asset" in 1963 to his campaign's connection with a network of anti-Semites with Nazi and fascist affiliations in 1988. Observers say that just some of those stories might have made a difference in the 1988 election if the nation's "establishment" press had reported them with the same intensity which the alternative press did.

2

## How EPA Pollutes the News.

Reports of improvement in environmental pollution levels in 1988 were a deliberate attempt by the Reagan administration's Environmental Protection Agency to mislead and pacify the public, according to a former EPA press officer. Also revealed was an administration policy which invited corporate executives to the White House to discuss revisions in pending EPA regulations in an effort to reduce costs to industry.

3

## Risk of N-Disaster with Shuttle

Despite serious concerns of experts in the field of radioactivity, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration still plans to launch the Project Galileo shuttle flight

in October, 1989. The shuttle will carry nearly 50 pounds of radioactive plutonium which would be enough to kill every person on earth if it were dispersed equally worldwide.

4

## Dangers of Food Irradiation.

While scientific research warns of potential dangers from consuming irradiated foods and despite at least one serious contaminating accident at a food irradiation plant in 1988, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) still plans to set up 1000 food irradiation facilities around the country within the next 10 years. Large amounts of radioactive waste, which currently pose a critical disposal problem for the DOE, will be used to process the food.

5

## Acid Rain.

One of America's Biggest Killers. Acid rain, once considered to be a threat only to crops, trees and fish, is now reported to be a significant threat to human health and lives. The U.S. Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), an advisory body to Congress, rated acid rain much more dangerous in 1988 than it was in 1984 when the OTA estimated the annual American death toll due to acid rain at 50,000 to 200,000. In 1986, the Brookhaven National Laboratory of New York estimated that acid rain annually kills 50,000 Americans plus 5,000 to 11,000 Canadians.

6

## U.S. Secret Police Network

The Law Enforcement Intelligence Unit (LEIU) is a super-secretive national, private intelligence agency which links the intelligence squads of almost every major police force in the United States and Canada. The LEIU is a private organization not subject to freedom-of-information laws nor answerable to any public authority. In the past the LEIU has been charged with wire-tapping, breaking and entering, and spying to gather information for its files.

7

## Third World Debt Kills Kids

*The State of the World's Children*, a UNICEF report issued in 1988, revealed that more than half a million children died in 16 developing nations last year because their debt-burdened governments cut back on social spending in order to repay debts to bankers in industrialized nations, including the United States. Altogether, UNICEF estimates that some 900 million people, mostly

women and children, are now suffering because of those debts.

8

## New Constitutional Convention?

Special interest groups, led by the conservative National Taxpayers Union, are pushing for a constitutional convention to amend the Constitution to provide for a balanced budget, voluntary prayer in school and restrictions on abortions. The Constitution requires approval by two-thirds (34) of the states to hold such a convention; as of late 1988, 32 states have voted for the convention--just two states short of an event that could change the political system we have had for the past 200 years.

9

## World Court Convicts U.S.

The United States may have to pay billions of dollars in reparations to Nicaragua as a result of the Reagan administration's support of the contra war effort. The Inter-

## Journalists Cited by Project Censored

Following are the investigative journalists and media cited by Project Censored for exposing the top ten issues most under-reported by the national news media in 1988:

1. *George Bush's Dirty Big Secrets*. The San Francisco Bay Guardian, 11/2/88, *George Bush's Dirty Secrets*, by Richard Meeker.

2. *How the EPA Pollutes the News*. Columbia Journalism Review, Nov/Dec 1988, *Dead fish and red herrings: how the EPA pollutes the news*, by Jim Sibbison; (Update source: Greenpeace, Mar/Apr 1989, *Whitewash: The Dioxin Cover-up*, by Peter von Stackelberg.)

3. *Risk of a Nuclear Disaster in Space*. The Long Island Monthly, October 1988, *The Fire Next Time*, by Karl Grossman; Extra!, Sep/Oct 1988, *Newsday Spikes Article on C\*\*\*\*\*ship*, by Dennis Bernstein.

4. *Dangers of Food Irradiation*. The Workbook, April/June 1988, *Food Irradiation: Its Environmental Threat, Its Toxic Connection*, by Judith H. Johnrud, Ph.D.; Northern Sun News, December 1988, *Update on food irradiation*, by JoAnne Korkid.

5. *Acid Rain -- One of America's Biggest Killers*. Vanguard Press, 1/28/88, *Acid Rain Is Killing Five to 20 Times as Many Americans as AIDS*, by Merritt Clifton.

6. *America's Secret Police Network*. The Los Angeles Times, 6/24/88, *Intelligence Units Across U.S. Probe Alleged LAPD Leak*, by William K. Knoedelseder Jr., Kim Murphy and Ronald L. Soble; (Background source: Penthouse, December 1976, *America's Secret Police Network*, by George O'Toole).

7. *Children are Dying to Pay the Third World Debt*. USA Today, 12/21/88, *World's children pay debt with their lives*, by Marilyn Greene; San Francisco Examiner, 12/21/88, *Children hardest hit by resurgence of global poverty*, by John Madeley, of the London Observer.

8. *The Specter of a Constitutional Convention*. The Economist, 5/21/88, *The Constitution: Lid on to keep the worms out*.

9. *U.S. Violates International Rule of Law*. Our Right To Know, Summer 1988, *The World Court and Nicaragua*, and The Los Angeles Times, 9/25/88, *U.S. Snub of World Court Won't Avert Day of Reckoning*, both by Howard N. Meyer; Congressional Record, 10/21/88, *The World Court*, by Hon. Ted Weiss.

10. *The Abuse of America's Incarcerated Children*. Arete, December 1988, *I Cried, You Didn't Listen*, by Dwight Boyd Roberts with Jack Carter.

# WS Stories

national Court of Justice found the U.S. guilty of "training, arming, equipping, financing and supplying the contra forces" in violation of our international law obligation "not to intervene in the affairs of another state."

10

## Abuse of Incarcerated Children

An average of 2.5 million children of both sexes between the ages of five and 19 years are incarcerated in America's juvenile detention facilities on any given day. Of that number, more than 1.2 million are sexually abused by their peers while nearly 150,000 more are being abused by their state-employed counselors and staff members. The tragedy doesn't always end with the release of the children in detention. Charles Manson and Gary Gilmore were once incarcerated children.

## Project Censored

The panel of judges who selected the top ten stories were: Dr. Donna Allen, president, Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press; Ben Bagdikian, professor, Graduate School of Journalism, University of California, Berkeley; Noam Chomsky, professor, Linguistics and Philosophy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; George Gerbner, professor, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania; Nicholas Johnson, professor, College of Law, University of Iowa; Charles L. Klotzer, editor and publisher, St. Louis Journalism Review; Rhoda H. Karpatkin, executive director, Consumer's Union; Brad Knickerbocker, editorial page editor, The Christian Science Monitor; Judith Krug, director, Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association; Bill Moyers, executive editor, Public Affairs Television; Jack L. Nelson, professor, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University; Herbert I. Schiller, professor, Department of Communication, University of California, San Diego; Sheila Rabb Weidenfeld, president, D.C. Productions.

The Sonoma State University student researchers, who reviewed and evaluated more than 400 "censored" nominations from throughout the country, were Karen Baeck, Shawn Connally, Elvia Diaz, Paul Farkas, Stacy Freitas, Robin Imsdahl, Julie Labrincha, Star Lightner, Mark Lowenthal, Andrew Metrogen, Joe Murray, Suellen Ocean, Julie Peterson, Cyerce Puccio, James Sanders, Rick Scott, Claus Sellier, Wendy Silkworth and Robin Watters.

Jensen, who created Project Censored in 1976, said "If the media had spent less

## Honorable Mentions

The other 15 under-reported stories of 1988 were: *The Hidden Costs of Oil to America's Consumers; U.S./Mexican Plants Turn the Border into a Toxic Wasteland; Germ Warfare Toxins Sent Through the U.S. Mail; Reagan's "Secret Laws" and "White Propaganda;" The Untold Story of What's Happening in Guatemala; America's Coastal Resources are in Critical Danger; Sweden Sets International Example by Eliminating All Nuclear Power; American Parents are Committing Their Children to Adolescent Mental Institutions; Abusing Hispanic Women is Routine at the U.S./Mexican Border; Punishing the Unborn for the "Sins" of the Mother; The New York Times: America's Pro-nuke Newspaper of Record; Evangelists Hunt Down Last of Paraguayan Indians; Reagan Administration Used Secret Gallup Polls for Propaganda; The Drug Warlord of Burma Wants to Make a Deal; Alaska Runs a State-sanctioned Poaching Monopoly.*

time analyzing its own election polls and more time probing George Bush's political background, the public would have been far better informed when it went to the polls last November. The readers of Willamette Week in Portland, Oregon, know more about what kind of person George Bush really is than do the readers of The New York Times."

Anyone interested in nominating a 1989 story for next year's project can send a copy of the story to Carl Jensen, Project Censored, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928.

## Planning for the THIRD ANNUAL COUNTER PRESS CLUB BALL:

June 21, 7:30 p.m.

Whamo's Big Yearly Event, with skits, songs, and the Newsmaker of the Year Pageant to be held sometime in October. Call 346-2507 for place of meeting.

## WHAMO Presents...The Whammy

by Dick Dinsmore

As you all know, this tiny publication began life without a name, only an acronym, WHAMO, the World-Herald Attitude Monitoring Operation. Having decided to change our name but not our commitment, we discussed how best to exemplify what this messenger stands for.

Great institutions periodically hand out awards to those that best fit their particular set of criteria. You know, the Emmy, the Tony, the Pulitzer, etc. Naturally, we wanted our award to have an equally haughty sounding name but we discovered that everyone's favorite publisher had pre-empted the market with his own world famous "ANDY."

In any event, we are proud to announce, in the spirit of and in memory to WHAMO, that prize soon to be cherished above all others--the WHAMMY.

Now what say you on the criteria for the coveted WHAMMY? As with art, we concluded that the essence of this award is felt more than defined, however we did establish words that typically describe the recipients: illogical, cowardly, frustrating, illogical, inconsistent, condescending, self-righteous, humorless, patronizing, sloppy, illogical, pompous, and sexist.

We also decided that if any one recipient receives the award three times in a row that the award would be retired and held in perpetuity in memory of that recipient.

It seems the W-H must have gotten wind of our little award and tried to retire the WHAMMY before we got to print.

Allow us to point out some of the items that caused the award committee to focus here rather than elsewhere.

It was first felt that the award should simply be presented to the front-page headline writer for masquerading as the editorial writer. But then we deferred to the general headline writer for the unique ability to combine words which give no idea whatsoever as to what the story is that is being headlined. You know those headlines with words you've seen and heard before, but when put together by this headline writer

defy any concept or idea. Those headlines that make you wonder if you're in the middle of a stroke.

But once again, give the editors enough space and they'll choke themselves.

First they condemned the men and women who peacefully met in Washington and expressed their political viewpoint on abortion. Here is what we think. The W-H's own poll reflects the majority view that abortion should not be legislated but is rather an individual determination. We think the W-H doesn't like this view but is afraid to express its opinion for fear of losing readership and, therefore, money. The W-H is frustrated and chooses to condemn by picking at them. They editorially chastised this event because one of the leaders stated, "we are going to take this town." This reference was meant figuratively and in fact no government buildings or leaders were taken hostage. These people were taking part in democracy in its purest form. They were trying to influence their government by exercise of free speech.

This activity of peaceful expression should be praised. This is the stuff of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Ghandi.

Then they wrote an editorial in praise of the students in China who only want to have the right to peacefully gather and express their opinion to their government. Do we have to go to China to send a message to Omaha?

Brother Francke points out their logical inconsistencies elsewhere in this publication related to the trial of Ollie North. We can only add that the W-H failed to point out that Ollie was convicted of three felonies and let go of the rest of the charges because the jury concluded that the higher ups in the Reagan administration were more guilty than Ollie!

As you can determine, if we waited any longer the WHAMMY would be retired before birth. Therefore, we proudly present our first WHAMMY to the Omaha World-Herald.

*Readers are invited to nominate possible recipients for future WHAMMY's*

# W-H Equates Lawbreaking, Political Courage

by Warren T. Francke

*Media critic Warren Francke is a professor of journalism at UNO.*

Thanks to the Merry Machiavellians who write editorials for the Wordly-Herald, I finally understand why Ollie North is so heroic.

I already knew he was heroic in wartime. Now I understand about his White House heroism. They explained in the editorial on May 6, "Hounding of Ollie North," which wins my Perverse Punditry of the Month competition.

"It's crazy" to convict Ollie, we read, because a much worse person worked for House Speaker Jim Wright. In short, a worse wrong makes Ollie right.

On one side, the Merry Machiavellians gave us Col. North, "the young husband and father," faced with "dark forces... working against him." (Be fair: It wasn't "Dark Forces" in caps, complete with Darth Vader breathing through a black mask.)

On the other side, they gave us Congress, which hires "a creature who pounded and slashed a female stranger to within an inch of her life."

I see. North can flout the constitution because a man who committed a horrible crime worked in a Congressional office. I'm surprised Ollie didn't use that farfetched straw man in his legal defense.

The slashing creature aside, the Herald editorial transformed lawbreaking into political courage, "daring to differ with the foreign policy of the congressional leadership." Thus the daily endorsed the idea of a Marine Colonel executing his own foreign policy (President Reagan said it wasn't his policy, and it surely wasn't the policy of the Secretary of State).

But the most brazen behavior was yet to come. When a Public Pulse letter took the editorial amorality to task, the editors offered one of those highly selective responses to the letter. It cited a little loophole for immunity against such accusations, namely, the editorial's inclusion of "Certainly it's wrong to destroy evidence and deceive investigators."

Certainly those words appeared in the editorial, but they weren't to be taken seriously. The words that followed made it clear that "the line between right and wrong is sometimes determined by who has more votes."

In short, when it comes to Iran-Contra and Ollie North, the Herald can't tell the difference between right and wrong. Adrift without a moral compass, the Herald thinks "right" may be whatever the "right" executive branch uses to subvert a "wrong" Congress. As long as Jim Wright provides a scapegoat, a president can do no wrong unless

he slashes a female stranger.

## Ohhh, THAT Hitler!

The most poignant paragraph in the paper:

"She has hired a chauffeur and he drives her around Omaha each day from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. and evenings from 6 p.m. to 9 or 10 p.m."

Sure, it reads like a MAT schedule, but the Herald's Bob Dorr thus capsulized the lonely cruising of Mrs. B, the remarkable Rose Blumkin. Dorr gave us a page one parable of the generation gap at Nebraska Furniture Mart, with the 95-year-old grandmother doomed to watch the world go by from the back seat of her sedan. The story should win an award. By the way, did you notice how the Herald had to explain Adolph Hitler to us?

After reporting that Mrs. B had called her grandsons "Hitler," the story added: "Adolph Hitler's Nazis killed 6 million Jews during World War II. The Blumkins are Jewish."

That was for readers who weren't watching "War and Remembrance" on TV. Without it, they'd think Hitler had something to do with carpets.

## Last Smear Wins

I'm embarrassed. I spoke too soon. The Sunday before Omaha's city elections I declared a flyer from Steve Exon "my pick for the worst piece of campaign advertising."

Exon smeared his 7th District City Council opponent by asking, in large headline type atop the single-issue flyer, "Why is Chuck Sigerson Defending Larry King Jr.?"

It cited three direct quotes, all dated Nov. 20, including one I picked on back in December. The one where Sigerson said how people came into money is a private concern, "Maybe somebody in the past hit a lottery."

And maybe that's fair game a half year after the Franklin Credit Union case first made headlines. But the present tense--"is defending"--and the focus of the flyer seemed unfair to me.

Well, the day after my TV commentary, the morning mail brought something worse aimed at Exon. The anonymous flyer dredged up an even older issue, Exon's bankruptcy in the 1970s, and turned it into an 11th hour smear.

Given the flyer's appearance the day before balloting, the Herald and TV stations did the right thing: they ignored it until after the vote.

By the way, the daily endorsed the Democrat, Exon. While that's not a rarity, it's interesting. Sigerson ran a non-partisan race, but he's been a strident Republican activist and it didn't help him in the Herald's

eyes to turn his campaign over to Lee Terry, the ex-newscaster long identified with the party's right wing.

If you think of the Herald as conservative, don't ever confuse that notion with the newspaper's hostility toward the Republican right in its more kinky manifestations.

## Life for Bluffers

On the lighter side: Wondering what happened to that wild and crazy "The Council of Bluffs"?

You weren't? More's the pity. It's time you took a stand on the side of local creativity.

While you devoted your attention to world hunger or nuclear waste, WOWT pushed "Superboy" aside one Saturday evening and ran a local creation, a comedy game show called "The Council of Bluffs." The claim was made that its future depended on viewer response.

Well, some 60 viewers responded and the show will reappear as early as September.

Who cares? Anyone who believes television stations should provide some opportunity for local talent. TV began with great local diversity and then turned all its non-news time over to the networks and national syndicators. Fewer and fewer in New York and Hollywood created more and more of what we watched. Now producer John Menzies and a cast of standup comedians can show their stuff. While a UNO student, Menzies proved he had talent when his "Ashgrove" character won him the top collegiate award for cartooning.

## Then Kevin Said...

Speaking of TV news, Omaha will lose a leading media couple when WOWT anchor Kathleen Leighton leaves in June.

Her spouse, Kevin Collison, covered downtown development and city hall for the Herald before signing on as Mayor Walt Calinger's press aide.

When they shuffle off to Buffalo, they'll join a growing band of Omaha expatriates. Stan Lipsey, former Sun Newspapers publisher, runs Warren Buffett's Buffalo newspaper, and Gary Nielsen, ex-KETV station manager and more recently with KPTM, now heads a TV station there.

Media talents aside, Kathleen and Kevin hosted memorable parties, first on the old Mercer mansion grounds and then in their downtown highrise apartment. I'll wait a decent interval after their departure before I tell you the great story I just heard about the night Kevin proposed to her in New York City.

## Send in the Doves

It was a good-news bad-news roller-coaster. The good news: The Herald sent

columnist Pete Citron to cover the promising Omaha Playhouse "Quilters" tour of the Soviet Union.

The bad news: The Russians performed "A Comedy of Errors," and most columns brought home the message that any sensible American should stay here where we do things right.

Give Citron credit for finding a bright note to end on. His final column fit the original hope for a friendly exchange between human beings, regardless of politics.

## Only One Woman?

Ever read a simple fact in the newspaper and end up making a small career out of checking it out? I read a fascinating story in the Metropolitan weekly about writer Marilyn Coffey, but I was stopped by this claim:

Kristen Lueth wrote that Coffey was "the only female news reporter in the state of Nebraska in 1959." Coffey was "a general news reporter" for the Hastings daily, the only woman with that title in the state in '59.

I knew that some women ran everything then at weekly papers, as women had since colonial times. I also knew women worked in news in Omaha then, and not just in the society or women's news sections. Follow my inquiry, Part One:

First phone call went to Mildred Hollingsworth, who I knew was already a reporter for the Associated Press when I started working as a 17-year-old Herald copy boy in 1954. Turns out Millie began in news here back in the mid-1940s. Technically, though, she was not a daily newspaper reporter.

Second call went to the Herald city desk. When did Mary McGrath start there? McGrath was just honored by Creighton University, especially for her work as a medical reporter, but she started that beat in 1970. Turns out Mary joined the Herald in 1957, but didn't leave women's news until 1964.

Did any women work on the Herald's city news before her? Sure, Evelyn (Molly) Simpson did in the 1940s, during the war, but she switched to women's news. Any others? Several retirees recalled Clair Conley, a Creighton grad who worked news in 1950, but left after a falling out in 1951.

Best I could tell from conversations with former editors Hugh Fogarty, Lou Gerdes and Pat Wolfe, no woman held a regular news beat for the rest of the 50s. At most, one or two sat on the rewrite desk and helped with weather, hospital calls or church news.

Those were macho days in the Herald newsroom, where a woman might be needed only to interview a rape victim. I made some other interesting discoveries about women in Nebraska news, but they'll have to wait for another time.